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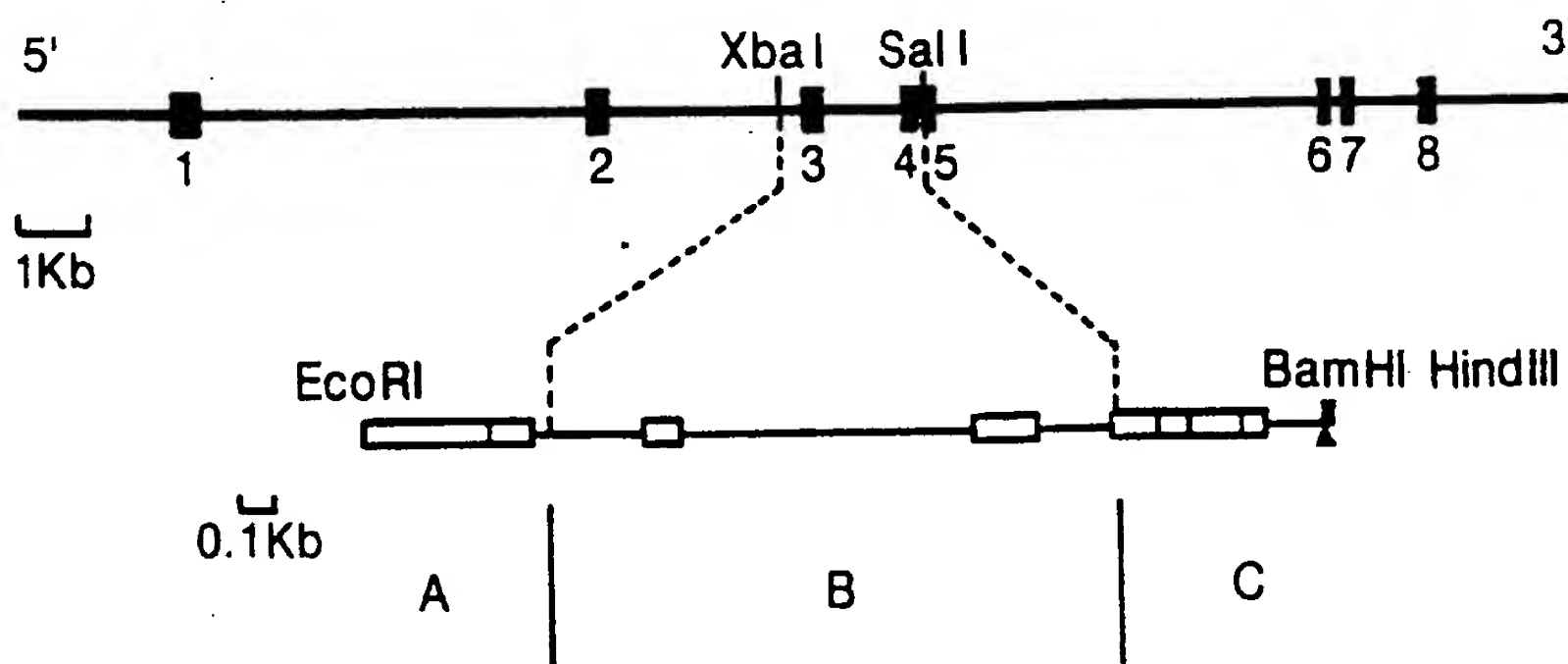
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(54) Title: HUMAN ZONA PELLUCIDA PROTEIN ZP3



(57) Abstract

The invention comprises a novel polypeptide or a functional derivative thereof having human ZP3 activity or human ZP3 antigenicity. It also comprises epitopes of said polypeptide, antibodies to the polypeptides or the epitopes, as well as vaccines for contraception and methods for expressing the polypeptides in a suitable host.

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HUMAN ZONA PELLUCIDA PROTEIN ZP3.

The invention relates to a polypeptide or a functional derivative thereof having human ZP3 activity or having, at least in part, human ZP3 antigenicity.

During the process of fertilization, the first interaction between mammalian gametes is mediated by binding of sperm cells to a species specific receptor on the zona pellucida (ZP) that surrounds the female gamete. The ZP is an extracellular matrix which comprises three glycoproteins, designated ZP1, ZP2 and ZP3, of which ZP3 has been identified as the sperm receptor (reviewed in Wassarman, Development 108, 1-17; 1990).

Numerous in vitro and in vivo studies using both porcine and murine ZP proteins have indicated that ZP3 is an important candidate target antigen in experimental strategies aimed at the development of immuno-contraception (Henderson et al., J. Reprod. Fert. 83, 325-343; 1988 and refs. therein). The recent cloning and characterization of the murine ZP3 cDNA by screening of a mouse ovary cDNA expression library with anti-mouse ZP3 antibodies represents an important step towards this end (Ringuette et al., Developmental Biology 127, 287-295; 1988). Subsequently, ZP3 cDNA probes were used for isolation of the corresponding genomic ZP3 DNA (Chamberlin and Dean, Developmental Biology 131, 207-214, 1988; Kinloch et al., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci. USA 85, 6409-6413, 1989).

The potential of ZP3 for contraception was emphasized by studies that revealed a long term infertility following vaccination of female mice with an oligopeptide derived from the murine ZP3 amino acid sequence (Millar et al., Science 246, 935-938; 1989).

For immunocontraception in man, mouse polypeptides are not suitable since the ZP3 sperm receptor is species specific. Moreover, polypeptides from non-human origin may lead to unwanted immune responses in man.

Therefore, development of a safe and efficient contraceptive vaccine based on (part of) the human sperm receptor requires information on and availability of the human ZP3 polypeptide.

The isolation of sufficient amounts of human ZP3 polypeptide from female gametes is of course not possible. However, we have succeeded in identifying a human gene and elucidating its sequence. This opens the possibility to produce ZP3 polypeptides and/or ZP3 polypeptide fragments either by recombinant DNA technology or solid phase polypeptide synthesis.

The invention therefore comprises a novel DNA-molecule coding for at least a part of human ZP3 polypeptide. Said DNA-molecule comprises at least a part of the sequence shown in Fig. 2.

The invention also comprises a polypeptide coded for by at least part of the above-mentioned DNA-molecule. Said polypeptide may comprise at least a part of the amino acid sequence shown in Fig. 2.

Of course, functional derivatives as well as fragments of the polypeptides according to the invention are also included in the present invention.

Functional derivatives are meant to include polypeptides in which one or more of the amino acids have been replaced with a chemically comparable one.

The crux is of course that they should still show human ZP3 antigenicity.

This means that upon administration (possibly with an adjuvant) they should give rise to antibodies which recognize human ZP3.

The polypeptides according to the invention can be produced either synthetically or by recombinant DNA technology. Methods for producing synthetic polypeptides are well known in the art and do not need any further elaboration.

Production of polypeptides by recombinant DNA techniques is a general method which is known, but which has a lot of possibilities all leading to somewhat different results. The polypeptide to be expressed is coded for by a DNA sequence or more accurately by a nucleic acid sequence.

This nucleic acid sequence must be transcribed (optionally) and translated to the wanted polypeptide. In order to reach that goal the nucleic acid sequence is normally cloned into a vector with which a host cell is transformed. The vector can be either self replicating or it may integrate into the DNA of the host.

Different host cells lead to different polypeptides. Prokaryotes do not possess the organelles necessary for glycosylation. The polypeptides produced by them will be without carbohydrate side chains. Eukaryotes do have the glycosylation machinery, but yeast cells will give a different glycosylation pattern than mammalian cells.

Preferred for the polypeptides according to the invention is an expression system which gives the most "natural" glycosylation pattern. Towards this end mammalian cells are most preferred.

We have also identified epitopes on the human ZP3 polypeptide which may have contraceptive potential. These epitopes comprise at least a part of one of the following sequences:

-ThrLeuMetValMetValSerLys-,

-SerArgArgGlnProHisValMetSerGln-,

-GluValGlyLeuHisGluCysGlyAsnSerMetGlnValThrAspAspAlaLeu-,

-PheSerLeuArgLeuMetGluGluAsnTrpAsnAlaGluLysArgSerProThrPhe-,

-CysGlyThrProSerHisSerArgArgGlnProHisValMetSerGlnTrpSer-,

or

-SerGlnTrpSerThrSerAlaSerArgAsnArgArgHisValThrGluGlu
AlaAspValCysValGlyAlaThrAspLeuProGlyGlnGluTrp-.

Small polypeptides like these are more easily produced synthetically. They can also be linked together with the same or different "epitopes" to form a larger more antigenic polypeptide.

One aim of all the polypeptides according to the invention is to produce a contraceptive vaccine using them. The vaccination may be either a passive or an active immunization.

For an active immunization a polypeptide according to the invention is administered to a female (possibly with an adjuvant). The administration will give rise to an immune response by the female. Antibodies will be produced which recognize human ZP3 on the ovum. These antibodies will specifically bind to the sperm receptor binding site so that spermatozoa cannot bind, or otherwise the antibodies will prevent this binding through steric hindrance. Passive immunization basically works the same way. Instead of the antigen or its mimicry the antibodies against it are directly administered. Thus, antibodies have to be raised against the polypeptides according to the invention.

This is achieved through an active immunization scheme of a suitable mammal. The B-lymphocytes of the mammal are harvested after a suitable period of time and immortalized through fusion or transformation. These methods are well known in the art. Antibodies can be isolated from the culture of the immortalized lymphocytes.

There is, however, a problem with antibodies of animal origin. Upon repeated administration they will give rise to an anti-antibody response in the immunized woman. It is therefore preferred to use humanized antibodies or small parts of antibodies which will not lead to an immune response. Methods for humanizing antibodies, such as CDR-grafting, are known (Jones et al., Nature 321, 522-525, 1986). Methods for producing fragments of antibodies which are still specific for the antigen of the original antibody are also known (Udaka et al., Molec. Immunol. 27, 25-35; 1990). Another possibility to avoid antigenic response to antibodies to polypeptides according to the invention is the use of human antibodies or fragments or derivatives thereof.

Human antibodies can be produced by in vitro stimulation of isolated B-lymphocytes, or they can be isolated from (immortalized) B-lymphocytes which have been harvested from a female immunized with at least one polypeptide according to the invention. Another object of the invention is the use of ZP3 polypeptide and antibodies directed to it in diagnostic test kits.

Some antibodies to human ZP3 have now been obtained. It lies within the skill of the art to produce anti-idiotypic antibodies which recognize the antigen binding site of the antibody and therefore are an "internal image" of the antigen.

These anti-idiotypic antibodies will be also very useful for vaccine and diagnostic purposes.

In the following experimental part the isolation of the human ZP3 DNA-sequence and the human ZP3 amino acid sequence, as well as a method of expressing a recombinant polypeptide showing ZP3 antigenicity, as well as a procedure to make a synthetic polypeptide showing such antigenicity are shown. These examples are merely meant to illustrate the invention and should not be constructed as a limitation of its scope.

EXAMPLES.

MATERIALS AND METHODS.

All recombinant DNA procedures were performed essentially according to procedures known as such (Sambrook et al., Molecular Cloning, a laboratory manual, 2nd edition, CSH-laboratory press, 1989).

Restriction enzymes and DNA modifying enzymes were used as recommended by the suppliers.

A human ovary gt10 cDNA library was purchased from Stratagene.

Oligonucleotide synthesis.

Oligonucleotides were prepared on an Applied Biosystems 381A DNA synthesizer and directly used for cloning purposes.

Peptide synthesis.

Oligopeptides were produced by solid phase peptide synthesis using procedures described by Fields and Noble (*Int. J. Pept. Prot. Res.* 35, 160-214; 1990). The following ZP3 peptides were synthesized: (amino acids are given in 3 letter code)

- ZP3(93-110):

GluValGlyLeuHisGluCysGlyAsnSerMetGlnValThrAspAspAlaLeu

- ZP3(172-190):

PheSerLeuArgLeuMetGluGluAsnTrpAsnAlaGluLysArgSerProThrPhe

- ZP3(327-344):

CysGlyThrProSerHisSerArgArgGlnProHisValMetSerGlnTrpSer

- ZP3(341-360):

SerGlnTrpSerThrSerAlaSerArgAsnArgArgHisValThrGluGluAlaAspVal

- ZP3(362-372):

CysValGlyAlaThrAspLeuProGlyGlnGluTrp

Antibody production.

Polyclonal antisera were raised with various antigens:

- **Total human zona pellucida.** Salt stored human zonae pellucidae were heat solubilized and mixed with Freund's adjuvants for immunization of rabbits. Antiseraum titers were assayed on ELISA plates coated with porcine ZP-proteins.

- **βGal-ZP3 fusion protein.** The fusion protein was partially purified from sonicated bacteria based on its insolubility and separated by SDS polyacrylamide gelelectrophoresis (SDS-PAGE). By electro-blotting the proteins were transferred to a nitrocellulose membrane. The region carrying the hybrid protein was excised and dissolved in DMSO. This was mixed in a 1:1 ratio with Freund's adjuvants and used for immunization of rabbits.
- **CHO produced ZP3.** A similar procedure was followed for the ZP3 protein produced by Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells. Concentrated culture medium was separated by SDS-PAGE. The 40-60 kiloDalton region was excised and used for immunization of mice.
- **Oligopeptides.** Synthesized peptides were physically linked to keyhole limpet hemocyanin (KLH) and injected in rabbits. As a control rabbits were immunized with KLH only. Sera were screened on ELISA microtitre plates coated with peptide.

• Human egg fluorescence assay.

Salt stored unfertilized human eggs (after 48 hour incubation with sperm in an IVF program) were incubated with antisera (1:50 diluted in buffer A [PBS + 5% BSA]). After three washes eggs were incubated with a second antibody (swine anti rabbit or mouse conjugated to FITC, 1:100 diluted in buffer A) and incubated for 1 hour at 37 °C. Following three additional wash steps fluorescence was measured with a Nikon microscope and exposure analyser. Non-stained (negative) control eggs are dark, with a long exposure time, and positively stained zonae pellucidae have shorter exposure times.

Human sperm-zona binding assay.

Human eggs (see above), were incubated in rabbit serum, washed 3 times with buffer (BWW + 3% BSA), incubated in buffer (control) or antibodies (undiluted, 37°C, 1 hour), washed 3 times and introduced in droplets of human capacitated spermatozoa (10^7 sperm/ml, 37 °C, 16 hour). Loosely adherent spermatozoa were removed from eggs by repeated pipetting. Bound spermatozoa were fixed and stained with BWW containing 1% glutaraldehyde and Hoechst (H33258, 20 g/ml) and the number of bound spermatozoa were counted with a fluorescence microscope.

RESULTS.

Synthesis and construction of a mouse ZP3 probe.

A 135 bp mouse ZP3 probe was constructed by assembling 8 synthetic oligonucleotides (27-51 mers). This fragment, comprising part of exon 5 and 6 of the murine gene (position 771 to 909 in Ringuette et al., Developmental Biology 127, 287-295; 1988) was provided with unique 5' BamHI and 3' HindIII restriction sites and subcloned in pGEM3 (Promega). Subsequently its nucleotide sequence was verified.

Cloning and characterization of the human ZP3 gene.

A human genomic EMBL3 library was screened with a ^{32}P -labeled ZP3 probe (135 bp fragment described above). Three overlapping EMBL clones showed a strong hybridization and were characterized in more detail. A limited physical map of these clones is schematically depicted in Fig. 1. Restriction fragments from clones I1 and D1 were subcloned in pGEM vectors and M13mp18/19 and used for genomic characterization of the human gene. This involved localization of the exons by Southern blot analysis with ^{32}P -labeled oligonucleotides from the mouse ZP3 sequence followed by sequence analysis. As is demonstrated in Fig. 1, the human gene consists of 8 exons spread over approximately 20 kb of genomic DNA. All identified exons are flanked by consensus splice donor and splice acceptor signals (not shown). From sequence analysis of all exons the complete coding sequence for the ZP3 gene could be deduced (presented in Fig. 2). The human ZP3 gene encodes a polypeptide of 372 amino acids with a calculated molecular weight of 41437 Dalton.

Cloning of human ZP3 cDNA.

A human ovary cDNA library (gt10) was screened with ^{32}P -labeled fragments from human ZP3 exon 1, 5 and 7. This yielded several partial cDNA's that contained only the 3' half of the ZP3 coding sequence (exon 5 to 8).

Sequence analysis of 3 independent cDNA clones confirmed the previously determined genomic ZP3 sequence except for one residue in exon 7 (see Fig. 2). At nucleotide position 1064 a G and C residue was found in genomic and cDNA respectively. In the encoded amino acid sequence this yields an arginine or a threonine residue respectively at position 345. This sequence difference probably represents a polymorphism in the human ZP3 gene and polypeptide.

Expression of recombinant ZP3 in CHO cells.

For expression in CHO cells the size of the ZP3 gene has been reduced to allow insertion in a mammalian expression vector. Various ZP3 DNA fragments have been assembled to a 'minigene' as is illustrated in Fig. 3. Exon 1 and 2 were joined by PCR-technology (Horton et al., Gene 77, 61-68, 1989; Yon and Fried, Nucl. Acids Res. 17, 4895, 1989)) and provided with 5' EcoRI and 3' XbaI sites respectively. Subsequently, this DNA fragment was ligated to a genomic XbaI-SalI fragment carrying exon 3, 4 and part of exon 5 and the partial cDNA harboring exon 5 to 8 on a SalI-HindIII fragment. The resulting 2.7 kb 'minigene' contains a truncated intron between exon 2 and 3 and the natural introns between ZP3 exons 3 and 4 and exon 4 and 5. The integrity of the polypeptide encoding nucleotide information of this ZP3 construct was completely verified by sequence analysis.

The ZP3 'minigene' was subsequently inserted in a mammalian expression vector in which the ZP3 gene is driven by the strong SV40 early promoter. In addition, this vector harbored β -Globin splicing and SV40 poly-adenylation signals for correct RNA processing of the expressed gene and the selectable marker gene aminoglycosylphosphotransferase (Colbere-Garapin et al., J. Mol. Biol. 150, 1-14, 1981) which allows for isolation of stable transformants by selection for G418 resistance. CHO cells were transfected with the ZP3 expression construct using the calcium-phosphate precipitation technique (Graham and van der Eb, Virology 52, 456-467, 1973; Wigler et al., Proc. Natl. Acad. Sci USA 76, 1373-1376, 1979). Mass populations of G418 resistant transformants (representing 300-500 independent clones) were analysed for expression of the recombinant ZP3 gene.

As is demonstrated in Fig. 4, Northern blot analysis of total RNA from pooled transformants with a ^{32}P -labeled ZP3 probe reveals a relatively high level of expression of the transfected ZP3 gene (as compared to the highly expressed actin gene, not shown). Moreover, it was demonstrated that the minigene RNA is correctly processed to a mRNA which is slightly larger than the natural transcript found in human ovary RNA (see Fig. 4). This size difference is most likely due to flanking 5' and 3' sequences present in the expression vector.

Correct splicing and processing of the recombinant gene was further confirmed by isolation of a partial cDNA carrying exon 1 to 5 from G418 resistant CHO transformants. Sequence data of this cDNA were similar to the transfected DNA and support the conclusion that the introns are correctly spliced from the ZP3 minigene transcript.

Culture media of growing mass populations were examined for the presence of recombinant ZP3 polypeptide by Western blot analysis. With a polyclonal antiserum directed against deglycosylated porcine ZP3 (Henderson et al., Gamete Research 18, 251-265, 1987) recombinant ZP3 polypeptide could be detected in culture medium. This signal was absent in medium from non-transfected CHO cells.

Expression of recombinant ZP3 in E. coli.

For expression in E.coli first a full length ZP3 cDNA was constructed using a cDNA fragment covering exon 1 to 5 isolated by PCR from CHO transformants and the partial cDNA clone (harboring exon 5 to 8) isolated from a human ovary cDNA library. Four ZP3 cDNA fragments were cloned in frame to the E.coli LacZ gene in pEX-plasmids (Biores) allowing the production of a β -galactosidase-ZP3 fusion polypeptide as reported by Stanley and Luzio, EMBO J. 3, 1429-1434, 1984). The expression of fusion polypeptides in E.coli was examined by SDS polyacrylamide gelelectrophoresis (SDS-PAGE) and western blot analysis. The results of these experiments are presented in Fig. 5. Following heat shock induction, all four LacZ-ZP3 constructs yielded fusion polypeptides, although to a much lesser extent than the LacZ gene. The molecular weight of the hybrid polypeptides, as observed on coomassie stained gels (see Fig. 5A), were in agreement with the expressed ZP3 parts. This was further confirmed by western blot analysis with anti- β -galactosidase antibodies (not shown) and a rabbit antiserum raised against ZP3 amino acids 341 to 360 coupled to KLH

(Fig. 5B). Only fusion polypeptides carrying this region, i.e. ZP3-A and ZP3-D, were recognized by the antiserum. An antiserum against KLH yielded a result similar to the background staining in Fig. 5B (not shown). In addition, β Gal-ZP3 fusion polypeptides were recognized by antisera raised against total human zonae pellucidae (not shown).

Binding of ZP3 antibodies to human eggs.

A human egg fluorescence assay was developed to characterize the binding of the various ZP antibodies to human zonae pellucidae. The results of three different experiments are depicted in Fig. 6. Serum against KLH and a normal mouse serum failed to give fluorescent staining whereas with all antisera against ZP components strong to intermediate levels of fluorescence were observed. From the presented data it can be inferred that antisera against ZP3(93-110), ZP3(172-190), ZP3(327-344), ZP3(341-360) and ZP3(362-372) recognize human oocytes.

Effect of ZP antibodies on sperm-egg recognition.

The contraceptive potential of the ZP3 antibodies was analysed in a human sperm-zona binding assay. The results of this assay is presented in Fig. 7. Antibodies against total human zonae pellucidae showed 75% inhibition of sperm-zona binding. An antiserum against KLH does not interfere with sperm-egg binding. In contrast, a mixture of ZP3-peptide antibodies (peptides: ZP3(93-110), ZP3(172-190), ZP3(341-360) and ZP3(362-372)) showed a relative inhibition of sperm binding of 35%. Antibodies against recombinant ZP3 from CHO cells reduced sperm binding with 55%.

Legends to the Figures.

Figure 1.

Restriction maps of EMBL clones I1, D1 and E1 (A) and genomic organization of the human ZP3 gene. Exons are indicated by black boxes. Restriction sites: S, SalI; B, BamHI.

Figure 2.

Nucleotide and amino acid sequence of human ZP3. At position 1064 a G or C residue was found in genomic and cDNA respectively. This apparent polymorphism yields a Thr or Arg amino acid residue. Arrows indicate exon junctions. Exon number is indicated in circles. The polyadenylation signal is underlined.

Figure 3.

Size reduction of ZP3 gene for insertion in a mammalian expression vector. A 2.7 kb ZP3 'minigene' was assembled from the following three fragments: A, exon 1 and exon 2 joined in frame to each other by PCR-technology yielding a EcoRI-XbaI fragment; B, a genomic XbaI-SalI fragment with exon 3, 4 and part of exon 5; C, a SalI-HindIII ZP3 cDNA fragment with exon 5 to 8 (provided with artificial 3' BamHI and HindIII sites). The three fragments were cloned in a pGEM vector (Promega) opened with EcoRI and HindIII and subsequently as a 2.7 kb EcoRI-BamHI fragment placed behind the SV40 promoter in a mammalian expression vector.

Figure 4.

Detection of ZP3 mRNA in total RNA (15 g) from CHO mass populations transfected with the ZP3 DNA and poly(A)⁺ RNA (5 g) from a human ovary. Lane 1, CHO; lane 2, CHO ZP3 transformants; lane 3, human ovary. Total ZP3 cDNA in pGEM3 was used as a probe.

Figure 5.

Production of β Gal-ZP3 fusion polypeptides in E.coli strain POP2136 carrying pEX-plasmids with human ZP3 cDNA inserts.

A. Coomassie staining of polyacrylamide gel (10%) and B. Western blot analysis with anti-ZP3-341-360 antiserum (1:150 dilution). From left to right the following samples are loaded on the gels (-, before induction; + 2 hours after induction): control pEX; pEX-ZP3A (KpnI-BamHI fragment; total cDNA); pEX-ZP3B (KpnI-SalI fragment; cDNA truncated at exon 5 encoding amino acid 1-241); pEX-ZP3C (KpnI-SphI fragment; cDNA truncated at end of exon 1 encoding amino acid 1-102); pEX-ZP3D (SmaI-BamHI fragment; 3' half of exon 5 + exon 6,7 and 8 encoding amino acid 257-372). Molecular weight (M) markers are at the extreme left (indicated in kiloDalton). Bacteria were grown at 30° C till OD₆₀₀ = 0.5-1 and subsequently induced for two hours at 42 °C. Aliquots were taken, centrifuged and total cells lysates were analysed.

Figure 6.

Binding of different antibodies (see materials and methods) to human eggs. Amount of second antibody labeled with FITC was measured with an exposure analyser and expressed as percentage of control (100% = dark, 0% = fluorescent eggs). 1: control; 2: antiserum against human zonae pellucidae; 3: antiserum against KLH; 4-8: antisera against ZP3(93-110), ZP3(172-190), ZP3(327-344), ZP3(341-360) and ZP3(362-372); 9: antiserum against βGal-ZP3; 10: mixture of sera of 3 mice immunized with recombinant CHO produced ZP3; 11: mixture of sera of 3 control mice. Average exposure time as percentage of control and standard error of the mean are given.

Figure 7.

Inhibition of sperm-zona binding by anti-ZP3 antibodies (see materials and methods). 1: control; 2: antiserum against KLH; 3: antiserum against human zonae pellucidae; 4: mixture of antisera against ZP3(93-110), ZP3(172-190), ZP3(341-360) and ZP3(362-372); 5: mixture of sera of 3 mice immunized with recombinant CHO produced ZP3. Average number of bound spermatozoa on total zonae pellucidae and standard error of the mean are given.

CLAIMS

- 1) Pure polypeptide or a functional derivative thereof having human ZP3 activity or having, at least in part, human ZP3 antigenicity.
- 2) Polypeptide according to claim 1, characterized in that it is produced recombinantly.
- 3) Polypeptide according to claim 1 or 2, characterized in that it comprises at least part of the following sequence:

1
MetGluLeuSerTyrArgLeuPheIleCysLeuLeuLeuTrpGlySerThrGluLeuCys
21
TyrProGlnProLeuTrpLeuLeuGlnGlyGlyAlaSerHisProGluThrSerValGln
41
ProValLeuValGluCysGlnGluAlaThrLeuMetValMetValSerLysAspLeuPhe
61
GlyThrGlyLysLeuIleArgAlaAlaAspLeuThrLeuGlyProGluAlaCysGluPro
81
LeuValSerMetAspThrGluAspValValArgPheGluValGlyLeuHisGluCysGly
101
AsnSerMetGlnValThrAspAspAlaLeuValTyrSerThrPheLeuLeuHisAspPro
121
ArgProValGlyAsnLeuSerIleValArgThrAsnArgAlaGluIleProIleGluCys
141
ArgTyrProArgGlnGlyAsnValSerSerGlnAlaIleLeuProThrTrpLeuProPhe
161
ArgThrThrValPheSerGluGluLysLeuThrPheSerLeuArgLeuMetGluGluAsn
181
TrpAsnAlaGluLysArgSerProThrPheHisLeuGlyAspAlaAlaHisLeuGlnAla
201
GluIleHisThrGlySerHisValProLeuArgLeuPheValAspHisCysValAlaThr
221
ProThrProAspGlnAsnAlaSerProTyrHisThrIleValAspPheHisGlyCysLeu

241
ValAspGlyLeuThrAspAlaSerSerAlaPheLysValProArgProGlyProAspThr
261
LeuGlnPheThrValAspValPheHisPheAlaAsnAspSerArgAsnMetIleTyrIle
281
ThrCysHisLeuLysValThrLeuAlaGluGlnAspProAspGluLeuAsnLysAlaCys
301
SerPheSerLysProSerAsnSerTrpPheProValGluGlyProAlaAspIleCysGln
321
CysCysAsnLysGlyAspCysGlyThrProSerHisSerArgArgGlnProHisValMet
341
SerGlnTrpSerThrSerAlaSerArgAsnArgArgHisValThrGluGluAlaAspVal
361
ThrValGlyAlaThrAspLeuProGlyGlnGluTrp

4) Polypeptide according to claim 1, 2 or 3,
characterized in that it is at least partially
glycosylated.

5) Polypeptide according to claim 3 or 4, characterized
in that it comprises at least one of the following
sequences:

-ThrLeuMetValMetValSerLys-,

-SerArgArgGlnProHisValMetSerGln-,

-GluValGlyLeuHisGluCysGlyAsnSerMetGlnValThrAspAspAlaLeu-,

-PheSerLeuArgLeuMetGluGluAsnTrpAsnAlaGluLysArgSerProThrPhe-,

-CysGlyThrProSerHisSerArgArgGlnProHisValMetSerGlnTrpSer-,

or

-SerGlnTrpSerThrSerAlaSerArgAsnArgArgHisValThrGluGlu

AlaAspValCysValGlyAlaThrAspLeuProGlyGlnGluTrp-.

- 6) Polypeptide having human ZP3 activity or having, at least in part, human ZP3 antigenicity, characterized in that it comprises at least part of the following sequence:

-SerGlnTrpSerThrSerAlaSerArgAsnArgArgHisValThrGluGluAlaAspVal-

- 7) Nucleic acid sequence coding for at least part of a polypeptide according to claims 1-6.
- 8) Nucleic acid sequence according to claim 7, characterized in that it comprises at least a part of the following sequence or functional derivatives thereof:

10	20	30	40	50	60
GAGGCGGCTGCCTGCTGCTCTGCAGGTACCATGGAGCTGAGCTATAGGCTCTTCATCTGC					
70	80	90	100	110	120
CTCCTGCTCTGGGGTAGTACTGAGCTGTGCTACCCCAACCCCTCTGGCTCTTGCAGGGT					
130	140	150	160	170	180
GGAGCCAGCCATCCTGAGACGTCCGTACAGCCCGTACTGGTGGAGTGTGAGGAGGCCACT					
190	200	210	220	230	240
CTGATGGTCATGGTCAGCAAAGACCTTTTTGGCACCGGGAAGCTCATCAGGGCTGCTGAC					
250	260	270	280	290	300
CTCACCTTGGGCCAGAGGCCTGTGAGCCTCTGGTCTCCATGGACACAGAAGATGTGGTC					
310	320	330	340	350	360
AGGTTTGAGGTTGGACTCCACGAGTGTGGCAACAGCATGCAGGTAAGTACGATGCCCTG					
370	380	390	400	410	420
GTGTACAGCACCTTCCTGCTCCATGACCCCGCCCCGTGGGAAACCTGTCCATCGTGAGG					
430	440	450	460	470	480
ACTAACCGCGCAGAGATTCCCATCGAGTGCCGCTACCCAGGCAGGGCAATGTGAGCAGC					
490	500	510	520	530	540
CAGGCCATCCTGCCCACCTGGTTGCCCTTCAGGACCACGGTGTTCAGAGGAGAAGCTG					
550	560	570	580	590	600
ACTTTCTCTCTGCGTCTGATGGAGGAGAACTGGAACGCTGAGAAGAGGTCCCCACCTTC					
610	620	630	640	650	660
CACCTGGGAGATGCAGCCACCTCCAGGCAGAAATCCACACTGGCAGCCACGTGCCACTG					

670 680 690 700 710 720
CGGTTGTTTGTGGACCACTGCGTGGCCACACCGACACCAGACCAGAATGCCTCCCCTTAT

730 740 750 760 770 780
CACACCATCGTGGACTTCCATGGCTGTCTTGTGACGGTCTCACTGATGCCTCTTCTGCA

790 800 810 820 830 840
TTCAAAGTTCCTCGACCCGGGCCAGATACACTCCAGTTCACAGTGGATGTCTTCCACTTT

850 860 870 880 890 900
GCTAATGACTCCAGAAACATGATATACATCACCTGCCACCTGAAGGTCACCCTAGCTGAG

910 920 930 940 950 960
CAGGACCCAGATGAACTCAACAAGGCCTGTTCTTCAGCAAGCCTTCCAACAGCTGGTTC

970 980 990 1000 1010 1020
CCAGTGGAAGGCCCGGCTGACATCTGTCAATGCTGTAACAAAGGTGACTGTGGCACTCCA

1030 1040 1050 1060 1070 1080
AGCCATTCCAGGAGGCAGCCTCATGTCATGAGCCAGTGGTCCACGTCTGCTTCCCGTAAC

1090 1100 1110 1120 1130 1140
CGCAGGCATGTGACAGAAGAAGCAGATGTCACCGTGGGGGCCACTGATCTTCCTGGACAG

1150 1160 1170 1180 1190 1200
GAGTGGTGACCATGAAGTAGAGCAGTGGGCTTTGCCTTCTGACACCTCAGTGGTGCTGCT

1210 1220 1230 1240 1250 1260
GGGCGTAGGCCTGGCTGTGGTGGTGTCCCTGACTCTGACTGCTGTTATCCTGGTTCTCAC

1270 1280 1290 1300 1310
CAGGAGGTGTCGCACTGCCTCCCACCCTGTGTCTGCTTCCGAATAAAAGAAGAAA

- 9) A vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence according to claims 7 or 8.
- 10) A host cell comprising a nucleic acid sequence according to claim 9, or a sequence according to claims 7 or 8.
- 11) A pharmaceutical composition comprising a polypeptide according to any one of the claims 1-6.
- 12) An immunocontraceptive vaccine comprising a polypeptide according to any one of the claims 1-6 and an adjuvant.

- 13) An immunocontraceptive vaccine comprising an antibody which recognizes a polypeptide according to any one of the claims 1-6.
- 14) A method for producing a polypeptide according to any one of the claims 1-4, characterized in that a host cell is transformed with a vector comprising a nucleic acid sequence coding for such a polypeptide and culturing said host cell in a suitable medium and isolating the polypeptide from the culture.
- 15) A method for producing an antibody to a polypeptide according to any one of the claims 1-6, characterized in that a suitable animal is injected with said polypeptide and an adjuvant, and that the B-lymphocytes of said animal are harvested after a suitable period of time and that antibody producing cells are selected and immortalized, after which they are cultured and the antibodies are isolated from the culture.

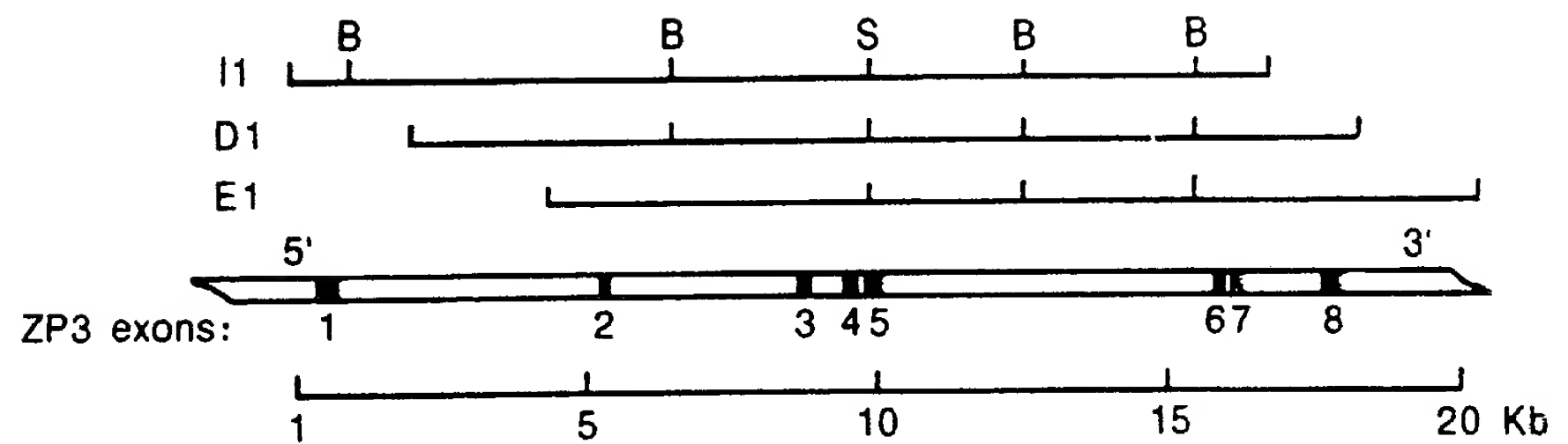


Figure 1

Fig. 2

5' 60
gaggcggctgcctgctgctctgcaggtaccATGGAGCTGAGCTATAGGCTCTTCATCTGC
MetGluLeuSerTyrArgLeuPheIleCys

120
CTCCTGCTCTGGGGTAGTACTGAGCTGTGCTACCCCCAACCCCTCTGGCTCTTGCAGGGT
LeuLeuLeuTrpGlySerThrGluLeuCysTyrProGlnProLeuTrpLeuLeuGlnGly

180
GGAGCCAGCCATCCTGAGACGTCCGTACAGCCCGTACTGGTGGAGTGTGAGGAGGCCACT
GlyAlaSerHisProGluThrSerValGlnProValLeuValGluCysGlnGluAlaThr

240
CTGATGGTCATGGTCAGCAAAGACCTTTTTGGCACCGGGAAGCTCATCAGGGCTGCTGAC
LeuMetValMetValSerLysAspLeuPheGlyThrGlyLysLeuIleArgAlaAlaAsp

300
CTCACCTTGGGCCCAGAGGCCTGTGAGCCTCTGGTCTCCATGGACACAGAAGATGTGGTC
LeuThrLeuGlyProGluAlaCysGluProLeuValSerMetAspThrGluAspValVal

360
AGGTTTGAGGTTGGACTCCACGAGTGTGGCAACAGCATGCAGGTAAGTAACTGACGATGCCCTG
ArgPheGluValGlyLeuHisGluCysGlyAsnSerMetGlnValThrAspAspAlaLeu

420
GTGTACAGCACCTTCCTGCTCCATGACCCCCGCCCCGTGGGAAACCTGTCCATCGTGAGG
ValTyrSerThrPheLeuLeuHisAspProArgProValGlyAsnLeuSerIleValArg

480
ACTAACCGCGCAGAGATTCCCATCGAGTGCCGCTACCCCAGGCAGGGCAATGTGAGCAGC
ThrAsnArgAlaGluIleProIleGluCysArgTyrProArgGlnGlyAsnValSerSer

540
CAGGCCATCCTGCCCACCTGGTTGCCCTTCAGGACCACGGTGTCTCAGAGGAGAAGCTG
GlnAlaIleLeuProThrTrpLeuProPheArgThrThrValPheSerGluGluLysLeu

600
ACTTTCTCTCTGCGTCTGATGGAGGAGAACTGGAACGCTGAGAAGAGGTCCCCCACCTTC
ThrPheSerLeuArgLeuMetGluGluAsnTrpAsnAlaGluLysArgSerProThrPhe

660
CACCTGGGAGATGCAGCCCACCTCCAGGCAGAAATCCACACTGGCAGCCACGTGCCACTG
HisLeuGlyAspAlaAlaHisLeuGlnAlaGluIleHisThrGlySerHisValProLeu

720
CGGTTGTTTGTGGACCACTGCGTGGCCACACCGACACCAGACCAGAATGCCTCCCCTTAT
ArgLeuPheValAspHisCysValAlaThrProThrProAspGlnAsnAlaSerProTyr

780
CACACCATCGTGGAATTCATGGCTGTCTTGTGCGACGGTCTCACTGATGCCICTTCTGCA
HisThrIleValAspPheHisGlyCysLeuValAspGlyLeuThrAspAlaSerSerAla

840
TTCAAAGTTCCTCGACCCGGGCCAGATACACTCCAGTTCACAGTGGATGTCTTCCACTTT
PheLysValProArgProGlyProAspThrLeuGlnPheThrValAspValPheHisPhe

Fig. 2 (c nt.)

5 6 900
GCTAATGACTCCAGAAACATGATATAACATCACCTGCCACCTGAAGGTCACCCTAGCTGAG
AlaAsnAspSerArgAsnMetIleTyrIleThrCysHisLeuLysValThrLeuAlaGlu

6 7 960
CAGGACCCAGATGAACTCAACAAGGCCTGTTCTTCAGCAAGCCTTCCAACAGCTGGTTC
GlnAspProAspGluLeuAsnLysAlaCysSerPheSerLysProSerAsnSerTrpPhe

1020
CCAGTGAAGGCCCGGCTGACATCTGTCAATGCTGTAACAAAGGTGACTGTGGCACTCCA
ProValGluGlyProAlaAspIleCysGlnCysCysAsnLysGlyAspCysGlyThrPro

1080
AGCCATTCCAGGAGGCAGCCTCATGTCATGAGCCAGTGGTCCAGGTCTGCTTCCCGTAAC
SerHisSerArgArgGlnProHisValMetSerGlnTrpSerArgSerAlaSerArgAsn

7 8 1140
CGCAGGCATGTGACAGAAGAAGCAGATGTCACCGTGGGGGCCACTGATCTTCCTGGACAG
ArgArgHisValThrGluGluAlaAspValThrValGlyAlaThrAspLeuProGlyGln

1200
GAGTGGtgaccatgaagtagagcagtgggctttgccttctgacacctcagtgggtgctgct
GluTrp

1260
gggcgtaggcctggctgtggtggtgtccctgactctgactgctgttatcctgggttctcac

1314
caggaggtgtcgcactgcctcccaccctgtgtctgcttccgaataaaagaagaaa 3'

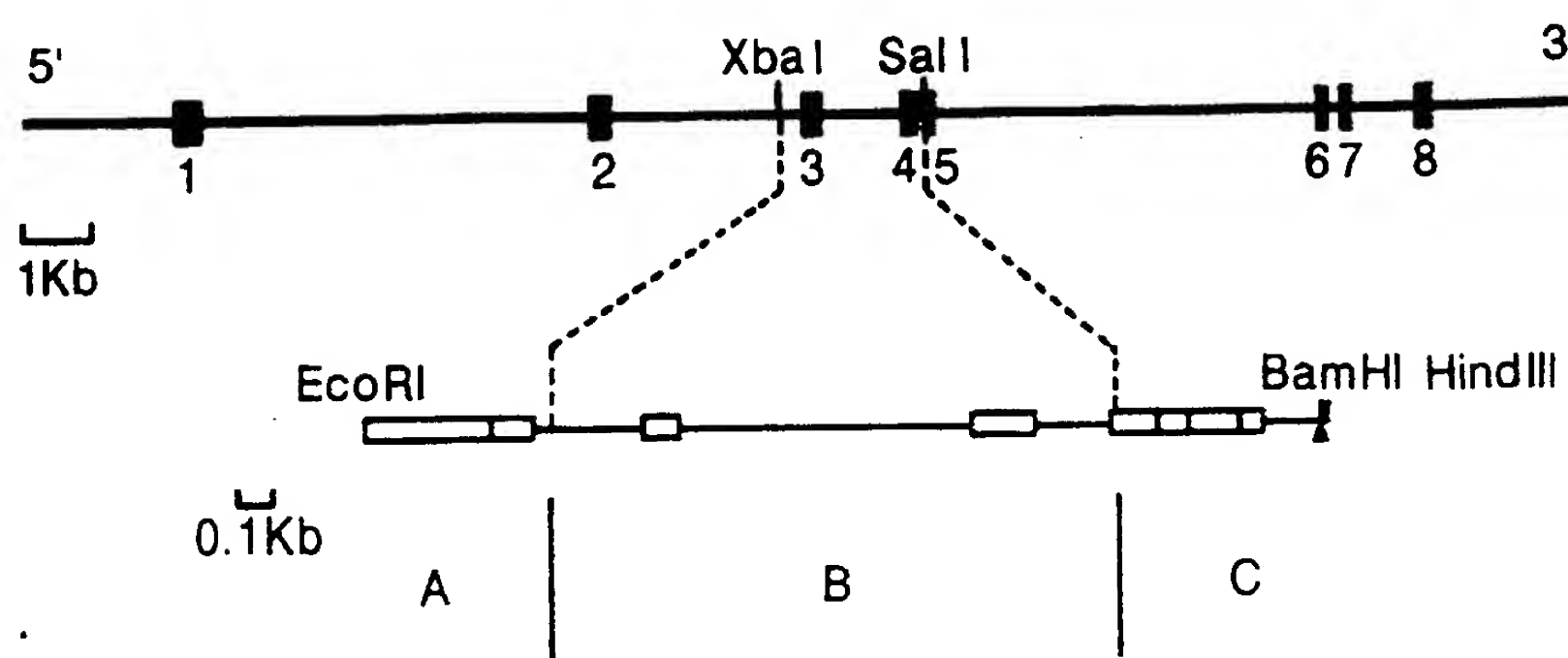
Figure 2

Fig. 4 5/8

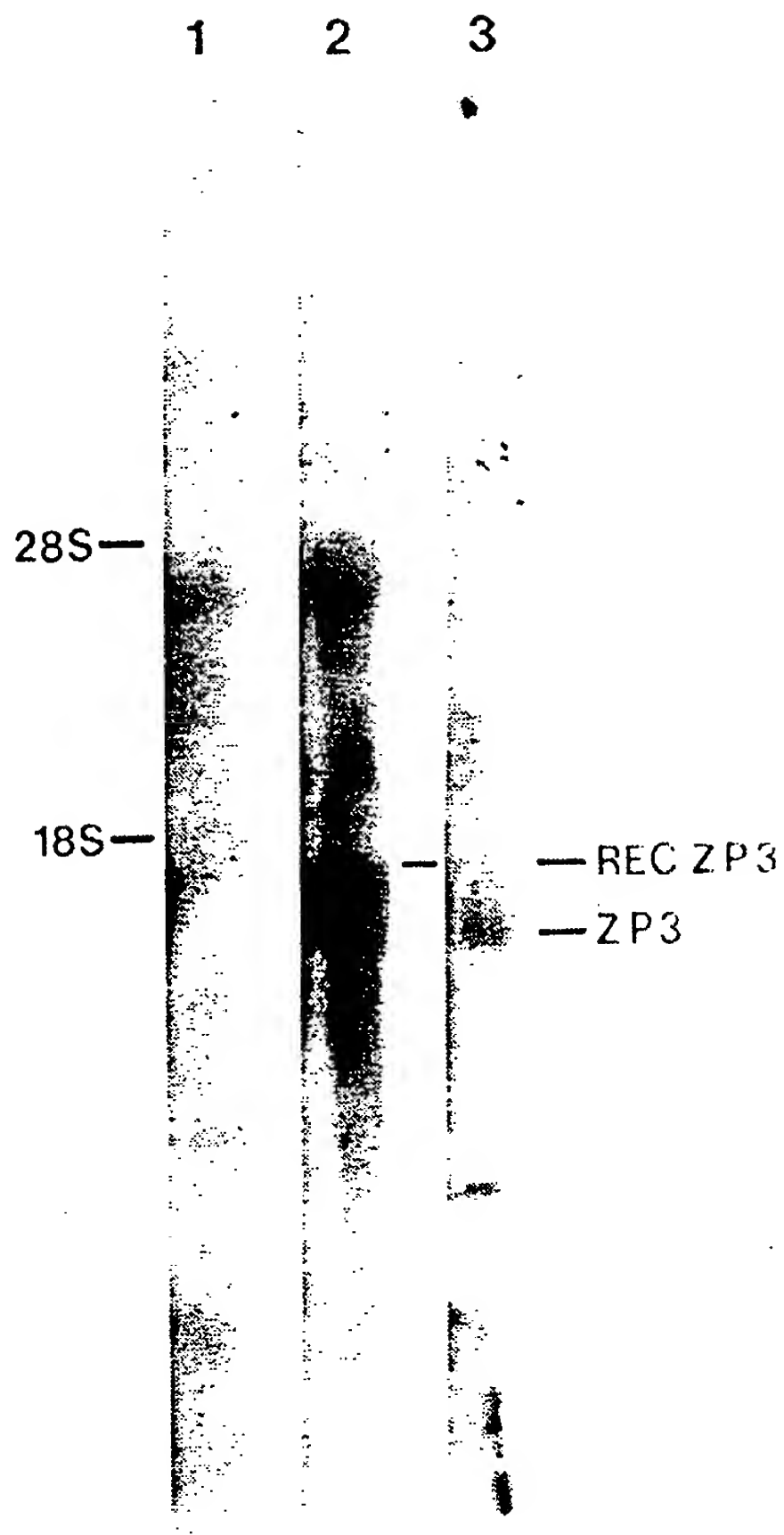
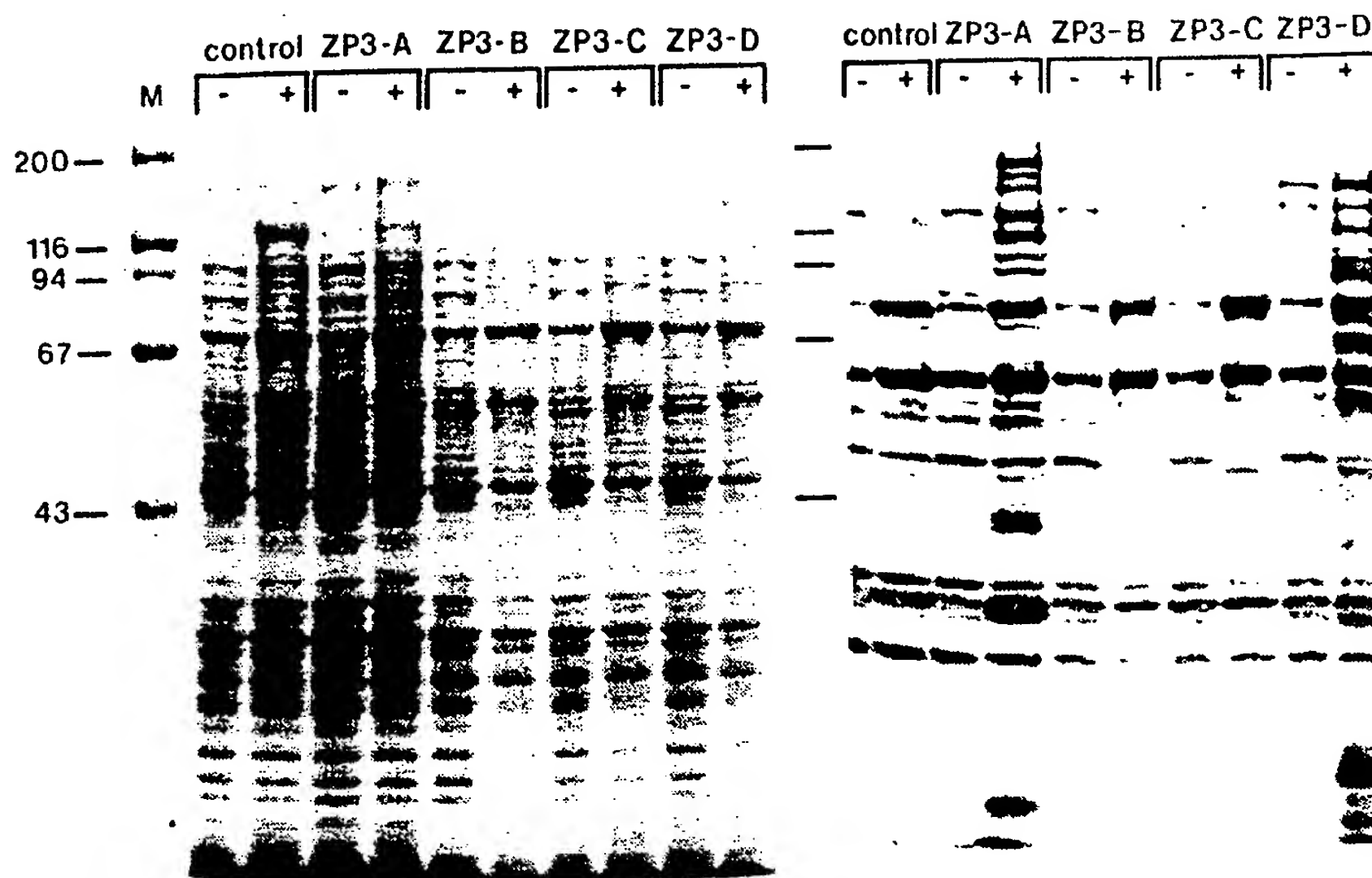


Fig. 5



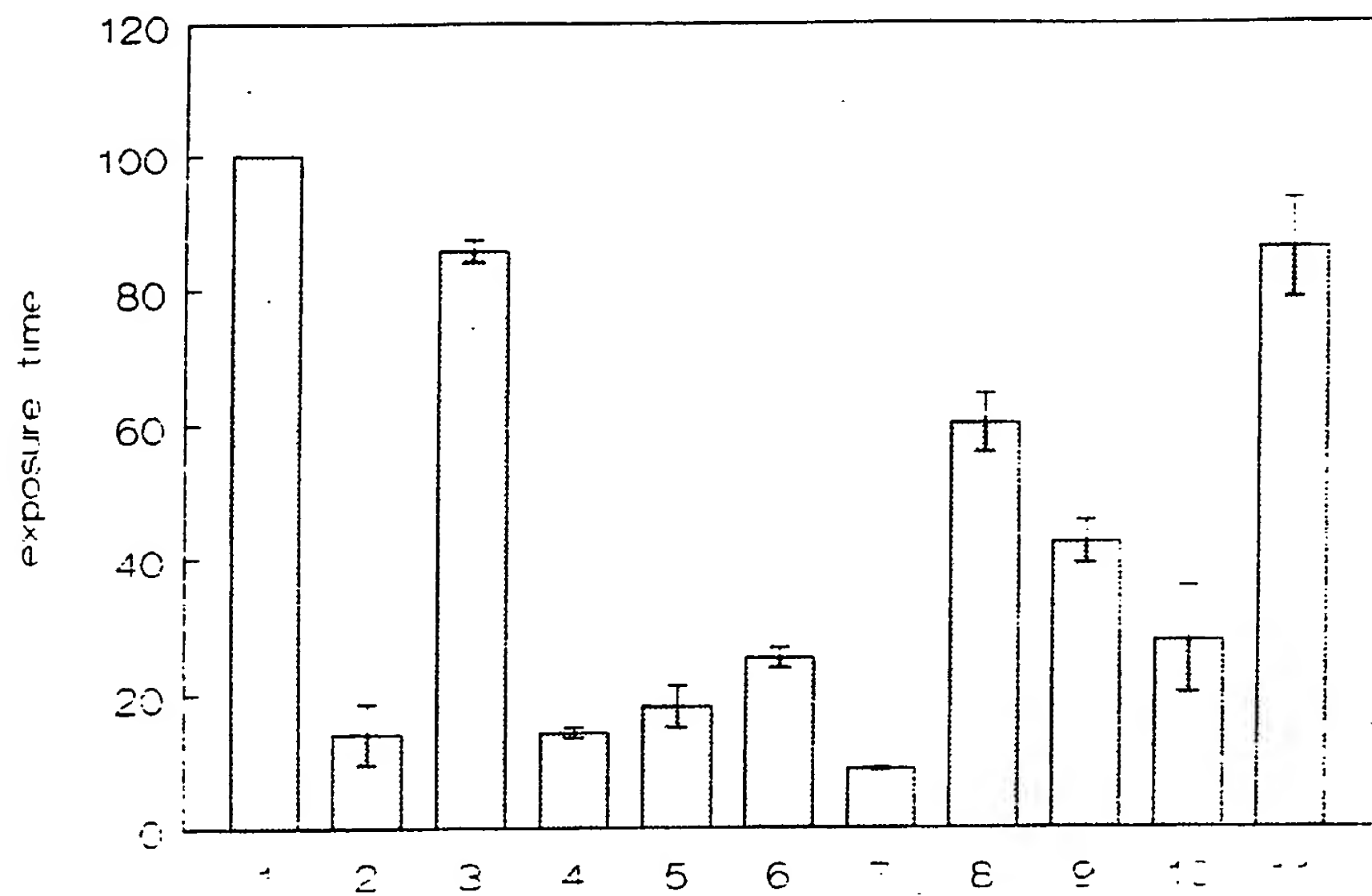


FIGURE 6

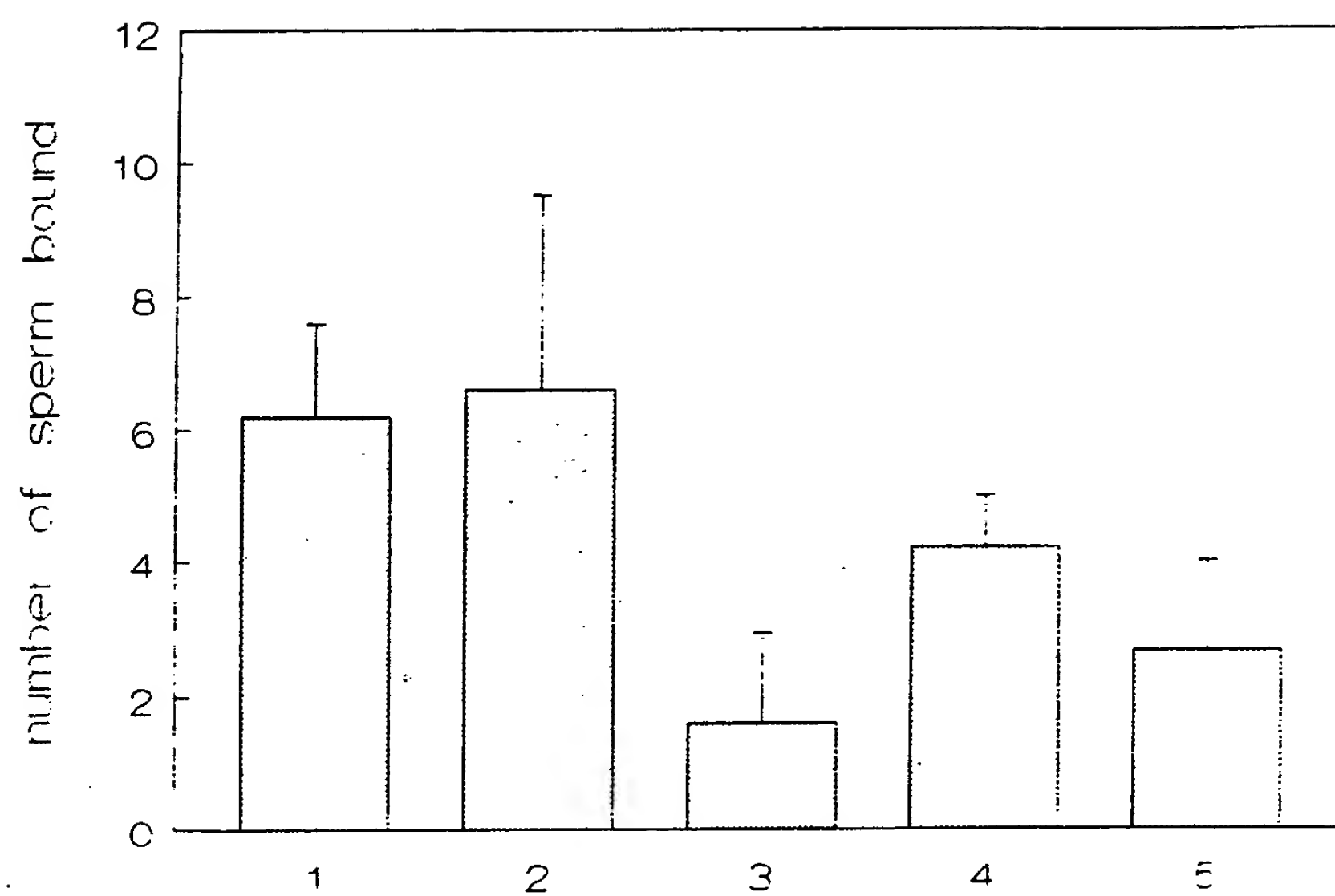


FIGURE 7

INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT

International Application No

PCT/EP 91/01538

I. CLASSIFICATION OF SUBJECT MATTER (if several classification symbols apply, indicate all)^o

According to International Patent Classification (IPC) or to both National Classification and IPC

Int.Cl.5 C 12 N 15/12 C 07 K 13/00 A 61 K 39/00
C 12 N 5/16

II. FIELDS SEARCHED

Minimum Documentation Searched⁷

Classification System

Classification Symbols

Int.Cl.5

C 12 N

C 07 K

Documentation Searched other than Minimum Documentation
to the extent that such Documents are Included in the Fields Searched⁸

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT⁹

Category^o Citation of Document, ¹¹ with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages ¹² Relevant to Claim No.¹³

X PROC. NATL. ACAD. SCI. USA, vol. 87, August 1990. 1-10,14
M.E. CHAMBERLIN et al.: "Human homolog of the
mouse sperm receptor", pages 6014-6018, see the
whole article

Y WO,A,8903399 (ZONAGEN, INC.) 20 1-10,14
April 1989, see the whole document
* Whole document *

Y PROC. NATL. ACAD. SCI. USA, vol. 83, June 1986, 1-10,14
pages 4341-4345; M.J. RINGUETTE et al.:
"Oocyte-specific gene expression: Molecular
characterization of a cDNA coding for ZP-3, the
sperm receptor of the mouse zona pellucida"
* Whole article *

-/-

^o Special categories of cited documents: ¹⁰

"A" document defining the general state of the art which is not
considered to be of particular relevance

"E" earlier document but published on or after the international
filing date

"L" document which may throw doubts on priority claim(s) or
which is cited to establish the publication date of another
citation or other special reason (as specified)

"O" document referring to an oral disclosure, use, exhibition or
other means

"P" document published prior to the international filing date but
later than the priority date claimed

"T" later document published after the international filing date
or priority date and not in conflict with the application but
cited to understand the principle or theory underlying the
invention

"X" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention
cannot be considered novel or cannot be considered to
involve an inventive step

"Y" document of particular relevance; the claimed invention
cannot be considered to involve an inventive step when the
document is combined with one or more other such docu-
ments, such combination being obvious to a person skilled
in the art.

"&" document member of the same patent family

IV. CERTIFICATION

Date of the Actual Completion of the International Search

22-10-1991

Date of Mailing of this International Search Report

09. 01. 92

International Searching Authority

EUROPEAN PATENT OFFICE

Signature of Authorized Officer

Nicole De Bie

III. DOCUMENTS CONSIDERED TO BE RELEVANT (CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET)		
Category	Citation of Document, with indication, where appropriate, of the relevant passages	Relevant to Claim No.
Y	CHEMICAL ABSTRACTS, vol. 110, no. 9, 1988, pages 425-426, abstract no. 73084e; (Columbus, Ohio, US), R.B. SHABANOWITZ et al.: "Molecular changes in the human zona pellucida associated with fertilization and human sperm-zona interactions", & ANN. N.Y. ACAD. SCI. 1988, 541, 621-32, see the whole abstract ---	1-10,14
Y	CHEMICAL ABSTRACTS, vol. 113, no. 11, 1990, pages 550-551, abstract no. 95872z, (Columbus, Ohio, US), R.B. SHABANOWITZ et al.: "Mouse antibodies to human zona pellucida: evidence that human ZP3 is strongly immunogenic and contains two distinct isomer chains", & BIOL. REPROD. 1990, 43(2), 260-70, see the whole abstract ---	1-10,14
P,Y	WO,A,9015624 (THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA - SECRETARY US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE) 27 December 1990, see the whole document -----	1-10,14

FURTHER INFORMATION CONTINUED FROM THE SECOND SHEET

V. ☐ OBSERVATION WHERE CERTAIN CLAIMS WERE FOUND UNSEARCHABLE ¹

This International search report has not been established in respect of certain claims under Article 17(2)(a) for the following reasons

1. ☐ Claim numbers because they relate to subject matter not required to be searched by this Authority, namely:
2. ☐ Claim numbers because they relate to parts of the international application that do not comply with the prescribed requirements to such an extent that no meaningful international search can be carried out, specifically:
3. ☐ Claim numbers because they are dependent claims and are not drafted in accordance with the second and third sentences of PCT Rule 6.4(a)

VI. ☒ OBSERVATIONS WHERE UNITY OF INVENTION IS LACKING ²

This International Searching Authority found multiple inventions in this international application as follows:

1. Claims 1-10,14
2. Claims 11-13,15

For further information please see form PCT/ISA/206 mailed on 07.11.91.

1. ☐ As all required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers all searchable claims of the international application
2. ☐ As only some of the required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant, this international search report covers only those claims of the international application for which fees were paid, specifically claims:
3. ☒ No required additional search fees were timely paid by the applicant. Consequently, this international search report is restricted to the invention first mentioned in the claims; it is covered by claim numbers:
1-10,14
4. ☐ As all searchable claims could be searched without effort justifying an additional fee, the International Searching Authority did not invite payment of any additional fee.

Remark on Protest

- ☐ The additional search fees were accompanied by applicant's protest.
- ☐ No protest accompanied the payment of additional search fees.

ANNEX TO THE INTERNATIONAL SEARCH REPORT
ON INTERNATIONAL PATENT APPLICATION NO. EP 9101538

SA 50197

This annex lists the patent family members relating to the patent documents cited in the above-mentioned international search report.
The members are as contained in the European Patent Office EDP file on 07/01/92
The European Patent Office is in no way liable for these particulars which are merely given for the purpose of information.

Patent document cited in search report	Publication date	Patent family member(s)	Publication date
WO-A- 8903399	20-04-89	US-A- 4996297	26-02-91
		AU-A- 2536088	02-05-89
		EP-A- 0396552	14-11-90
		JP-T- 3502571	13-06-91
WO-A- 9015624	27-12-90	AU-A- 5826790	08-01-91